



Region 8 - Community Relations

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Community Relations

Libby Community Advisory Group

Environmental Sampling

Meeting Summary April 8, 2004

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Introductions

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Gerald Mueller and members of the Libby Community Advisory Group (CAG) introduced themselves. A list of the members and visitors in attendance is attached below as [Appendix 1](#).

Background Factsheet

cag 12/11/03

Agenda

Cleanup Wages

The CAG agreed to the following agenda for this meeting:

Spring and Cleanup

- EPA Report
- TAG Report
- Helen Clark Presentation
- Public Comment

4/18/04

Boat Ramp Cleanup

(Delayed Web publication of Appendices, 4/19/04)

Flyway Cleanup

13/04

EPA Report

Jim Christiansen reported on behalf of EPA on the following topics.

EPA Administrator Visit - Administrator Leavitt has scheduled a visit to Libby on May 26, 2004 during which he will tour the town, visit with people affected by asbestos disease, and hold a public meeting. Mr. Christiansen stated that he is preparing a 15 - 20 minute briefing that he will present to the Administrator prior to his trip. The briefing will address the history of Libby asbestos exposure and EPA's Libby activities, what is here, the health risks here, progress of the cleanup, EPA's past and projected expenditures here, and the present budget shortfall.

Audience Member Comment - Allowing only 15 -20 minutes for the briefing is absurd. If you get only 15 minutes, what chance will we have to convey to the Administrator how serious this problem is? He should be taken to the cemetery to see the graves during his visit.

Response - I am trying for more time for the briefing. I will also do what I can to make sure that Libby people will have a voice during the visit.

Audience Member Question - Have you talked with the Administrator before?

Answer - I have talked with him when he was governor of Utah, but not since he became Administrator.

Audience Member Question - Do you have access to him?

Answer - Not direct access.

CAG Member Comment - I was told today that the Administrator does not want his visit to be a political football, so he does not want political people to attend.

Response - My understanding is that Senator Baucus will be present.

Audience Member Comment - Governor Martz will be in Asia on May 26, so she will not be here.

CAG Member Comment - It is good that the Administrator is coming and we should give him a

CAG Member Comment - In 1979 EPA was aware that Libby asbestos was causing disease in Marysville, Ohio. EPA conducted a study here in 1980. If EPA had acted in 1980 on what it knew, fewer people would have contracted asbestos-related disease here. EPA failed here, and as a result the federal government should provide funding for disease treatment.
Response - You should make this point with the Administrator.

CAG Member Comment - When Administrator Leavitt visits, we should publicly request that he honor the commitments made to us by his predecessor, Administrator Whitman.

CAG Member Comment - The letter writing campaign is underway, and businesses and organizations are signing the resolution. We still need for individual letters to present to Administrator Leavitt. Everyone here tonight should write a letter and contact their friends to do so too.

Cleanup Progress - Cleanup of 30 residences has been completed so far this year. We had anticipated completing 22 - 23 cleanups by this date, so we continue to be ahead of schedule. Since I was last in Libby, a building containing asbestos contamination located at the end of Mineral Avenue burned. Because the building contained asbestos, in two to three weeks its remains will be hauled to the asbestos cell in the county landfill and the site will be cleaned.

Audience Member Question - The site of the fire is surrounded by yellow tape advising people to stay away. How hazardous is the site?

Answer - During the fire air sampling was conducted downwind to determine if asbestos was leaving the site. Asbestos was not detected in the air samples. The site is being watered to keep down dust, and access to it is being restricted. We also collected samples after the fire and those were non-detect. The site will be cleaned, but it is not an immediate hazard.

CAG Member Comment - I am married to a firefighter. After a fire, the canvas suit that they wear for protection against contamination is sometimes worn in their personal vehicle and sometimes worn home. Wearing the suit in personal cars and at home risks contaminating family members including infants and children.

Response - The amount of asbestos contamination accumulated by firefighters is not close to the experience of the vermiculite miners. While we cannot control what firefighters do with their protective clothing, we do take dust samples in their facility where equipment is stored. I will talk with firefighters to advise them not to wear the protective suits home.

CAG Member Question - What happens if vermiculite is found after a cleanup?

Answer - It depends on the specific circumstances. If the visual inspection and/or sampling following a cleanup finds vermiculite that should have been removed pursuant to the cleanup work plan, then the contractor will be responsible for removing it. However, some contamination is deliberately not being removed such as vermiculite in walls or buried at depth. We are working out a program for handling situations in which this type of contamination is disturbed after the cleanup is completed.

CAG Member Question - Is the object to remove vermiculite that can be seen?

Answer - In specific use areas, such as gardens, vermiculite that we see is being removed. But as I said not all vermiculite is being removed. We are removing asbestos sources that are likely to be disturbed and present an exposure risk. We may leave vermiculite in some places such as in walls or buried at depth. We also do not clean heater ducts or remove carpets and we know this produces some uncertainty. We feel our cleanup plan is protective, but we know it is not perfect. That is one reason we are going back to sample many homes after cleanup is complete to make sure that the cleanup did work as intended.

CAG Member Comment - Some people that have contamination in their yards and are awaiting cleanup cannot afford to water all summer to prevent dust.

Response - I have inquired with several people about this and don't know any way that EPA can do this.

CAG Member Comment - Such funding should be provided pursuant to the CERCLA legislation.

CAG Member Question - Could you please explain more about how the visual cleanup trigger works?

Answer - In specific use areas where vermiculite is seen, cleanup will occur. Outside these areas, soil samples will be taken to make the cleanup decision. We are aware that some people perceive that the presence of vermiculite equates to high levels of asbestos, but this is not necessarily true.

CAG Member Question - What happens if vermiculite is seen two feet outside of a specific use area?

Answer - If sampling finds asbestos, the area will be cleaned. However asbestos is not detected in all samples of vermiculite. Outside the specific use areas, if a vermiculite sample does not detect asbestos, then cleanup will not happen.

CAG Member Question - Do you tell the homeowner in these circumstances?

Answer - The general guidance we provide to homeowners covers this situation.

CAG Member Question - Are these cleanup decision methods the same that were applied at the boat ramp?

Answer - Yes, we are using the same methods at the boat ramp, the flyway property, and residential cleanups.

CAG Member Question - Are you saying that vermiculite is being left because of monetary concerns rather than hazard?

Answer - No. I have pushed the level of protection as far as I can go. The use of visible vermiculite as a cleanup trigger for specific use areas is one way the EPA made the cleanup more protective, but we simply cannot apply that standard everywhere. I have to balance budgetary realities with what is scientifically defensible in court. The risk assessment has defined the lower limit of protection and our approach. The clearance standard we use in homes is 0.001 fibers per cubic centimeter.

CAG Member Question - How do we mitigate additional risk?

Answer - Future research may clarify the risk.

CAG Member Comment - I think you are doing a really good job, but we need more research and more information about risk.

Response - You may want to make this point to Administrator Leavitt and Senator Baucus.

Audience Member Question - How much money is being spent per residential cleanup and how does the expenditure break down between design and oversight and actual cleanup?

Answer - We probably spend about \$15-20 thousand on design and oversight for each house, and about \$30-40 thousand on the actual cleanup.

CAG Member Question - The sampling technique you are using for soil samples is polarized light microscopy (PLM). What does a PLM non-detect reading mean?

Answer - For any sampling method, non-detect is the lowest limit that the sampling method can guarantee detection. For example, if the non-detect limit is 1 fiber per cubic centimeter, then the sampling technique can theoretically guarantee detection when at least 1 or more fibers per cubic centimeter are present. It may be the case that the method might see lower levels, but you can't guarantee it. Establishing detection limits is tricky, and particularly so for asbestos. We have refined the PLM method for Libby asbestos and established a detection limit of about 0.1% asbestos. The limit for the standard PLM sampling is 1% asbestos. We have tested several methods and none have proven more effective than the one we are using. Electron microscopy could be used, but using it here for routine soil sampling would be too expensive. Because of the small sample size used in electron microscopy, this technique may miss asbestos that the Libby PLM technique would find. We have tested more techniques for analyzing Libby samples than any place else.

CAG Member Comment - At 1% detection level, a gram of soil may contain 10 billion asbestos fibers of 10 micron length. A non-detect reading of asbestos for a gram sample of soil could mean somewhere between none and 10 billion fibers.

Response - What is important is not the number of fibers in the soil, but the number that gets released and to which people might be exposed when the soil is disturbed. We are attempting to make the connection between soil levels and the exposure level.

CAG Member Comment - A 1% level is not necessarily safe.

Libby Superfund Site Organization - In response to a request from Gordon Sullivan, Jim Christiansen passed out a summary of how the responsibility for the cleanup work is organized

among EPA and its contractors. The hand out is included below as Appendix 2. EPA is responsible for the cleanup, but because it lacks the staff to implement cleanup projects, it contracts with the Volpe Center of the US Department of Transportation. The Volpe Center in turn hires and manages the contractors that design and conduct the cleanup pursuant to EPA oversight and standards. For the Libby work, the Volpe Center has contracted with a private sector firm, Camp, Dressor, and McKee (CDM) and other contractors, e.g. SaLUT/MARCOR, that conduct the work. Beginning with himself, Mr. Christiansen introduced members of the Libby Superfund team and each person briefly described their function. Those introduced included:

Jim Christiansen, EPA Remedial Project Manager - Responsible for everything at the site including investigation, cleanup, and restoration activities.

Courtney Zamora, Volpe Center Site Manager - Responsible for hiring and managing the contractors. Is the on-site government representative when Mr. Christiansen is not present.

Scott Supernaugh, CDM On-Site Construction Manager - Manages 12 construction employees and 3 administrative staff. Mr. Supernaugh has residential construction experience.

Greg Parana, CDM Site Health and Safety Officer - Takes ambient air samples and is an expert on asbestos regulations.

Dave Spielman, CDM Pre-Design/CIC Field Team Leader - Responsible for ensuring that the cleanups are designed pursuant to EPA standards. Works with Karen Berry.

Karen Berry, CDM Local Community Involvement Coordinator - Responsible for acting as the liaison between the cleanup contractor and Libby residents. She acts as the contact for residents before, during, and after the cleanups.

Patty Strong, CDM Sample Coordinator - Responsible for tracking all samples and for maintaining the data base.

Shawn Oliveira, CDM Site Health and Safety Officer - Responsible for protecting workers by evaluating containment and job safety.

Damon Repine, Mactec (CDM Subcontractor) Air Technician - Responsible for ambient and personal air monitoring.

Paul Opem, CDM Pre-Design Team Leader - Responsible for completing the cleanup pre-design, including visiting the contaminated properties, photographing and diagraming the site, and formulating the cleanup work plan from which contractors make bids.

Ben Shoup, CDM - Member of the Pre-Design Team.

Tom Vanderweel, CDM Construction Oversight - Responsible for overseeing work of the removal contractor, including soil and confirmation sampling.

Geoff McKenzie, CDM Design Manager - Responsible for overseeing preparation of the cleanup work plan and ensuring that the EPA cleanup criteria are applied to each property.

Stacy Zimmerman, SaLUT On-Site Coordinator - Responsible for ensuring a cost-effective cleanup.

Jim Ranlett, MARCOR Site Superintendent - Responsible for overseeing daily cleanup activities.

CAG Member Question - Given the uniqueness of each residence, developing the work plan for each cleanup must be difficult. What does the design team do?

Answer - The design team includes a structural and other engineers. The team carries out the following steps:

1. Visits all properties and conducts contaminant screening including looking for vermiculite and collecting soil and dust samples to identify which properties will be cleaned.
2. Once properties are selected, the pre-design team collects data including measurements and determinations of appropriate access to the indoor and/or outdoor areas in which removal of contaminated material will occur. Areas to be cleaned are photographed. Outdoor areas may be

surveyed to determine property boundaries. This information is provided to the design team located outside of Libby.

3. Design team engineers design the removal and remediation based on EPA cleanup and design criteria and draft the cleanup work plan.

4. CDM and Volpe personnel review the work plan to ensure that contractors can produce a fixed price bid from it.

EPA's work in Libby began with the emergency cleanups which Paul Peronard managed. The contractors conducting this work were originally paid on a time and materials basis. During the remediation phase, we have changed to cost plus contracts and more recently fixed price contracts. As we have developed experience, the cleanup costs are dropping and becoming predictable.

CAG Member Question - What happens if changes are necessary in a fixed price contract?

Answer - Offsets and change orders originate with the contractor and are submitted to CDM and Volpe for approval.

Audience Member Question - How many man hours per month do Volpe and CDM devote to the design and management of the Libby?

Answer - Volpe and CDM have a total of 15-20 people working full time plus another 20 working one-quarter to one-half time. About \$5 million per year is spend in Libby on these activities and another \$2 million off-site annually.

CAG Member Question - How does Courtney cut through all of this? Who is her support staff?

Answer - Courtney is backed up by Volpe employees including engineers, contract mangers, data base managers, lab support, quality assurance personnel, and scientists.

CAG Member Question - Who is paying for all of this? Do these funds come out of the cleanup funding?

Answer - The design and oversight and community involvement are all a part of the cleanup, and funding for these activities comes from the \$17 million annual budget.

TAG Report

Gayla Benefield and Gordon Sullivan reported on behalf of the Libby Technical Advisory Group (TAG). Ms. Benefield stated that the TAG Board has been reformed. She is now the Board Chair, LeRoy Thom is the Vice Chair and Les Skramstad is a Board member. Gordon Sullivan continues as the TAG Technical Advisor. The TAG's purpose is to ensure that EPA gets the cleanup done right the first time. This coming Tuesday from 7:00 to 9:00 p.m. the TAG will hold an open house in the Ponderosa Room of City Hall. The TAG meets on the Tuesday prior to the CAG meeting at the College. Gordon Sullivan stated that everyone is invited to the meetings he is holding on the risk assessment each Tuesday, except for the Tuesday of the TAG meeting, from 7:00 to 9:00 p.m. at the college.

Helen Clark Presentation

Helen Clark read a press release announcing a symposium on the University of Montana campus on May 1, 2004 entitled "Libby and Beyond: A Public Symposium on Asbestos." Andrew Schneider who wrote the stories in the Seattle Post Intelligencer on the Libby in late 1999 will be a presenter at the symposium. The full press release and a list of asbestos-related events is included below as Appendix 3.

Public Comment

Audience Member Comment - I have a question about two subjects. First, is it correct that EPA is doing tests in New York City in the area affected by the destruction of Trade Towers and finding Libby asbestos? Second, is it true that W.R. Grace is taking oxygen away from sick people?

Answer by Jim Christiansen - I have not been following the details of testing in New York.

Answer by Dr. Brad Black - I am not aware that W.R. Grace has cut off anyone from oxygen on the Grace Health Plan. However, this plan is voluntary and not an insurance plan. W.R. Grace's plan administrator, Health Network of America (HNA), is making clinical determinations without seeing

Brad Black/ CARD/Lincoln County Health Officer
LeRoy Thom/ Former W.R. Grace Employee
Gayla Benefield/ LCAORO/ARD Network
Norita Skramstad/ Asbestos Victim
Clinton Maynard/ Area Asbestos Research Group
Eileen Carney/ State Representative

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Last updated on Tuesday, July 5th, 2005
URL: <http://www.epa.gov/region8/superfund/libby/cag040804.html>